Policy for the Administration of Oxygen in Emergencies

The Food and Drug Administration generally regards oxygen to be a prescription drug. Nevertheless, FDA recognizes that there are many circumstances under which it would be impractical to insist that oxygen be administered only under the supervision of a physician.

Chiropractic physicians may obtain oxygen units on an over-the-counter non-prescription basis provided a few basic requirements are met. Access to emergency oxygen would be useful in the event of a cardiac arrest or other incident in which a patient may stop or have difficulty breathing.

According to the FDA, any oxygen inhaled by a human or animal is considered a drug as per section 201(g)(1) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, and is required to be dispensed by prescription. *However*, the agency allows medical oxygen to be dispensed without a prescription by properly trained individuals for oxygen deficiency and resuscitation, as long as the following conditions are met:

- 1) A high-pressure cylinder filled with medical oxygen and used for oxygen deficiency and resuscitation must have the following statement present on the drug label: "For emergency use only when administered by properly trained personnel for oxygen deficiency and resuscitation. For all other medical applications, Rx Only."
- 2) The equipment intended for such use must deliver a minimum flow rate of 6 liters of oxygen per minute for a minimum of 15 minutes, and include a content gauge and an appropriate mask or administration device.
- 3) Proper training shall include documentation that an individual has received training within the past twenty-four months or other appropriate interval, in the use of emergency oxygen, including providing oxygen to both breathing and non-breathing patients, and safe use of handling of emergency oxygen equipment. Training may be obtained from any nationally recognized professional organization, such as the National Safety Council, the American Heart Association, the American Red Cross, etc. Under no circumstances can emergency oxygen be used to fill high-pressure cylinders or be used in a mixture or blend.

Once all of these conditions are met, a properly trained individual may administer medical oxygen without a prescription.